



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

Spoken
3/25/13

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Testimony by Representative Edwin Vargas
6th Daistrict Hartford
General Administration And Elections Committee
March 25, 2013

SB 1146 An Act Concerning Cross Endorsements

To the Co-Chairs and members of the General Administration and Elections Committee: Senator Musto, Representative Jutila, Senator Meyer, Representative Lesser, Senator McLachlan, Representative Hwang and Members of the GAE Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak against SB 1146 "An Act Concerning Cross Endorsements."

It's an honor to serve as your colleague, and an honor to serve the people of the 6th House District and Hartford a city that I love. Offices like the one I now hold were only won after decades of struggle for fair representation that ensured that people, who occupied seats in government, reflected the identity of those who elected them. This was attained in Hartford through the power of cross endorsements.

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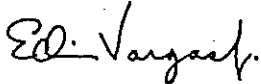
In 1991, through an alliance partially led by a minor party, People for Change, the voters of the city of Hartford elected an African-American woman as their mayor. This was a first in a major northeastern city. However, this was the culmination of more than two decades of work by the Puerto Rican Political Action Committee, a group I led at the time, and the People for Change Party. By electing a mayor, the Puerto Rican PAC and the People for Change Party were able to show that minor parties and small political organizations could work in major ways to elect candidates. The work of the People for Change Party and the Puerto Rican PAC changed

The work of the People for Change Party and the Puerto Rican PAC changed Hartford politics by organizing and then mobilizing a new voter base, in the same way that minor parties have always done. Minor parties, due to their limited resources and name recognition, are at a disadvantage in the traditional two-party political system. Yet, through cross endorsements, minor parties can contribute and function effectively within electoral politics. Minor parties in places without cross endorsements are in most cases, spoilers at best.

I was cross endorsed by a minor party. While not receiving an overwhelming number of votes on the minor party line, I realized that without it some voters in my district might not have voted at all. Whether they voted for me or not is irrelevant – the fact that they were given a choice on the ballot that they would not have found within the two-party system, illustrates what cross endorsements are all about. With my first hand knowledge that cross endorsements have expanded voter options my district – a predominately Latino district with a historically low voter registration to turnout ratio – I am opposed any legislation that scales back or limits the choices of electors in my district or any district in this state. As elected officials, it's our job to make sure that the electorate is engaged in the elections process, SB 1146 would only work to shut out voters who otherwise would vote for cross endorsed candidates.

As a colleague and as a citizen elector, I urge you to OPPOSE SB 1146.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ed. Vargas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and a stylized "V".

Edwin Vargas
State Representative